Rubrics are also ubiquitous in many classrooms. Rubrics help us to set **learning targets** and **standards**, identify benchmarks along a skills trajectory, and grade more fairly. But rubrics can be unwieldy and, in too many cases, hindered by dysfunctional detail (Popham, 1997).

A scoring guide is a user-friendly alternative to a rubric and an improvement on traditional answer keys. Scoring guides contain less verbiage and dysfunctional detail that might overwhelm students (remember our discussion of right-sized feedback and rubrics in Chapter 1).

Scoring guides offer students ways to unpack qualitatively distinct levels of response—without the added pressure of **grading** and distracting labels.

Scoring guides prioritize skills, often one strand at a time. Over the course of a **unit of instruction**, students and teachers may use multiple scoring guides to check progress toward the final performance, which will eventually be graded with an analytic rubric. For an example of a scoring guide from a research project conducted by University of California, Berkeley in a yearlong middle school science curriculum called "Issues, Evidence, and You" (IEY), see Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Applying Relevant Content Scoring Guide

Score	Applying Relevant Content: Response uses relevant scientific information in new situations, such as solving problems or resolving issues.
4	Accomplishes Level 3 *and* extends beyond in some significant way.
3	Accurately and completely uses scientific information to solve the problem or resolve the issue.
2	Shows an attempt to use scientific information *but* the explanation is incomplete; may have minor errors.
1	Uses scientific information incorrectly and/or provides incorrect scientific information *or* provides correct scientific information but does not use it.
0	Is missing, illegible, irrelevant, or off topic.
X	Student had no opportunity to respond.

Setting Students Up for Success With Peer Feedback: A Middle School Science Case Study Example

Let's look at what Ms. Denton, a middle school science teacher, does with her students before expecting them to give peer-to-peer feedback on their own. After briefly reviewing the characteristics of helpful formative feedback with her students, Ms. Denton prioritizes setting up an interactive task activity that students will evaluate together. The activity's purpose

EBSCOhost: eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) printed on 8/26/2025 7:06:05 AM UTC via SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use.